



1420 East Sixth Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620-0701  
September 27, 2001

**Montana Fish,  
Wildlife & Parks**

Environmental Quality Council  
Montana Audubon Society  
Montana DNRC – Trust Lands Division  
Montana State Library  
Montana State Parks Foundation  
Montana State Parks Association  
Montana Environmental Information Center  
State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO)  
Department of Environmental Quality  
Bureau of Land Management – Lewistown  
Montana Wildlife Federation  
Department of FWP

FWP Commissioners

Directors Office

Wildlife Division

Lands Section

Legal Unit

Region 4 – Supervisor, Parks, Wildlife, and Enforcement

Senator John Tester, 709 Son Lane, Big Sandy, MT 59520-8443

Representative John Witt, 2555 Russell Road, Carter, MT 59420-8230

Chouteau County Commission, PO Box 459, 1308 Franklin, Fort Benton, MT 59442-0459

Helen Fultz, HC64, Box 20, Fort Benton, MT 59442-9602

Darryl Wilson, 8522 South Frontage Road, Billings, MT 59101

Dear Interested Party:

The enclosed Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for a proposed donation of approximately 320 acres of land in Chouteau County, northeast of Fort Benton, to Montana FWP. The scope of the proposed project is for acquisition of the land only, with no developments or improvements planned at this time.

We would like your comments on the proposed land donation. Comments will be accepted through October 23, 2001. Please direct all comments to Tom L. Reilly, Montana Department of FWP, POB 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701, (406) 444-3752.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Tom L. Reilly  
Assistant Administrator  
Parks Division

**Draft  
Environmental Assessment**

**WILSON LAND DONATION**

September 24, 2001



***Montana Fish,  
Wildlife & Parks***

# DRAFT

## MEPA/NEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST

### PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Type of Proposed State Action**

Accept donation of 320 acres in Chouteau County.

2. **Agency Authority for the Proposed Action**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is authorized by Section 87-1-209 to acquire lands by gift for certain purposes including outdoor recreation and to extend and consolidate by exchange land with the consent of the commission and the approval of the board of land commissioners if over 100 acres.

3. **Name of Project**

Wilson Land Donation

4. **Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor (if other than the agency)**

Sponsored by Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP)

5. **If Applicable:**

Estimated Construction/Commencement Date	N/A
Estimated Completion Date	December 31, 2001
Current Status of Project Design (% complete)	N/A

6. **Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range and township)**

The 320-acre tract is approximately 25 miles northeast of Fort Benton, about 2 miles west of the Missouri River. There is no deeded access to the site. The legal description of the proposed donation is: Chouteau County, Montana, Township 26 North, Range 12 East, PMM, Section 35, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , W $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ , SW $\frac{1}{4}$ .

7. **Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:**

(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	_____ acres
residential	_____ acres	(e) Productive:	_____
industrial	_____ acres	irrigated cropland	_____ acres
(b) Open Space/Woodlands/		dry cropland	_____ acres
Recreation	_____ acres	forestry	_____ acres
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	_____ acres	rangeland	<u>320</u> acres
		other	_____ acres

8. **Map/site plan: attach an original 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.**

Please refer to Appendices 1 and 2.

9. **Narrative Summary of the Proposed Action or Project including the Benefits and Purpose of the Proposed Action.**

The project landowner wishes to donate this tract to the Parks Division of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) for public use. The tract does not have a dedicated public right-of-way and is considered landlocked. The terrain is very steep, as it includes part of Rattlesnake Coulee and tributaries. This is an ephemeral stream with no permanent water source in the area. Sagebrush, rabbitbrush and fescue are the primary vegetation. The property is classified by the Montana Department of Revenue as medium to lower capacity grazing land. It does provide excellent mule deer habitat; however, without adequate public access and because of its small size, it was not highly considered for a Fish, Wildlife & Parks wildlife easement or lease program. The site could provide some hiking and wildlife watching opportunities, but as stated, access is limited. Current use is indiscriminate with occasional use for winter grazing.

The Parks Division of FWP proposes to accept this land donation with the intention to exchange it directly or in a three-way exchange (to be determined) in the near future for other land with higher park and recreation value. It will not be managed as a state park or recreation area or improved in any manner, but held as a tool for other opportunities. The Parks Division does not have the funding for major new acquisitions at this time. The *2020 Vision for Montana State Parks* (FWP, December 1998, pages 151-152) projects that in the next five or more years it is realistic for the Division to work toward obtaining "key park inholdings and important adjacent parcels with the potential of adding one or more carefully selected new sites where there is political and public support. Land trades or selling surplus property would be one means of accomplishing this." The landowner supports this concept and has placed no restrictions on the property.

10. **Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.**

(a) **Permits:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
none		

(b) **Funding**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
FWP-Parks Division	approximately \$3,000 to cover transaction legalities

(c) **Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
FWP Commission	approval of acquisition
Montana State Land Board	approval of acquisition over 100 acres

**11. List of Agencies Consulted during Preparation of the EA.**

Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Parks Division

Lands Division

Wildlife Division

Nongame Species Coordinator

Montana Natural Heritage Program (Natural Resources Information System)

Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (water rights web page database)

Chouteau County (public access)

Land Appraisal by Barta Appraisal Service

Chouteau County Abstract Company

## PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

### PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT <sup>2</sup>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sup>3</sup>	None	Minor <sup>3</sup>	Potentially Significant		
<a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				1a.
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil which would reduce productivity or fertility?		X				
<c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				1a.
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other _____ n/a						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

1a. No changes in the tract's geologic or physical features will occur due to FWP ownership; the site will remain in it's present state. Mineral rights are included in the donation, however, no minerals will be extracted by FWP.

### PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT <sup>3</sup>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sup>3</sup>	None	Minor <sup>3</sup>	Potentially Significant		
< a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (also see 13 (c))		X				2a.
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. For P-R/D-I projects, will the project result in any discharge which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a)		n/a				
f. Other _____ n/a						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

2a. Ambient air quality will remain unchanged if FWP acquires this tract. Public roads or vehicle access do not contribute to the dust at this tract, nor is any construction anticipated which would alter ambient air quality.

Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

3. WATER	IMPACT <sub>3</sub>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sub>3</sub>	None	Minor <sub>3</sub>	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
< a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				3a.
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of flood water or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
ℳ For P-R/D-I, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c)		n/a				
ℳ For P-R/D-I, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a)		n/a				
n. Other: _____ n/a						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

3a. Use of the land will not change with the change in ownership; therefore, the conditions of surface water quality or volumes, drainage patterns, quality or quantity of ground water, or water contamination potentials will not be altered. Rattlesnake Coulee is considered an ephemeral stream with no other water sources on the property. There are no water rights with the tract.

- 3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- < Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- ℳ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- ℳ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

4. <u>VEGETATION</u>	IMPACT <sup>3</sup>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sup>3</sup>	None	Minor <sup>3</sup>	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?		X				
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				4c.
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				4d.
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X				4e.
ccf. For P-R/D-L, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		n/a				
g. Other: _____ n/a						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

4c. No species of concern have been recorded at the Natural Resources Information System on this tract (data search September 18, 2001). Use of the site will not change, thereby providing relatively protected habitat for plant species due to the remote and inaccessible location.

4d. Current grazing use of the land is questionable since the tract consists of very steep terrain and is not fenced. This tract is not leased or used by the current owner for grazing. FWP does not intend to lease it for grazing purposes.

Due to the remote and inaccessible location of this tract, an increase in weeds is not anticipated unless introduced from neighboring lands. The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) and the Bureau of Land Management own adjacent lands, both of which have weed abatement plans to help control weeds on their properties. This will aid in limiting the future spread of weeds on the proposed land acquisition.

Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

< 5. FISH/WILDLIFE	IMPACT <sup>3</sup>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sup>3</sup>	None	Minor <sup>3</sup>	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. For P-R/D-I, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f)		n/a				
i. For P-R/D-I, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d)		n/a				
j. Other: _____ n/a						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

FWP Regional Wildlife Manager Graham Taylor indicated to Sue Dalbey on September 17, 2001 that the property proposed for acquisition is very rugged and provides excellent mule deer habitat. Sage grouse use neighboring areas. No threatened or endangered species have been identified on this specific parcel, though they may frequent surrounding areas. Due the ephemoral nature of the stream, fisheries habitat is not a concern.

Dennis Flath, FWP Nongame Wildlife Coordinator, also related to Sue Dalbey on September 18, 2001, that no threatened or endangered species have been found on this section. Peregrine falcons are further down river; bald eagles focus closer to the river and riparian. Herpatology species may be found in low numbers. The plateau in the southeast portion of Section 35 may provide prairie dog habitat.

The Natural Resource Information System data search (September 18, 2001) revealed only the ferruginous hawk as a species of special concern in the neighboring area, but the range identified did not include section 35.

As noted above, the remote and inaccessible location of this property do not encourage public use, nor heavy grazing. The proposed 320 acre tract, if acquired by FWP, will continue to retain its natural characteristics with no improvements, thus no negative impacts to wildlife or wildlife habitat are anticipated.

<sup>3</sup> Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

< Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

α Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

αα Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

## HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS	IMPACT <sup>3</sup>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sup>3</sup>	None	Minor <sup>3</sup>	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		X				
b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other: _____ n/a						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

## HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

7. LAND USE	IMPACT <sup>3</sup>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sup>3</sup>	None	Minor <sup>3</sup>	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				7a.
b. Conflict with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				7b.
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other: _____ n/a						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

7a. The present owner does not lease the property for grazing. FWP also does not plan to lease the property for grazing due to the intentions for exchange in the near future. The property itself does not have a high value for rangeland; however, if used in conjunction with surrounding land, it may have a higher value. Other productivity values would be relative to wildlife habitat or recreation values, which will not change under FWP ownership, except to provide greater protection and a slight increase in public opportunity.

7b. The Missouri National Wild and Scenic River border is approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile directly east of the discussed tract. This tract is also outside of the proposed Missouri Breaks National Monument area.

Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

## HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS	IMPACT <sup>3</sup>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sup>3</sup>	None	Minor <sup>3</sup>	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X				
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. For P-R/D-I, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		n/a				
e. Other: _____ n/a						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

## HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT	IMPACT <sup>3</sup>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sup>3</sup>	None	Minor <sup>3</sup>	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				
f. Other: _____ n/a						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- < Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- ≤ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- ≤≤ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

## HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

10 PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES	IMPACT <sup>3</sup>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sup>3</sup>	None	Minor <sup>3</sup>	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify: _____		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				10b.
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased used of any energy source?		X				
< e. Define projected revenue sources						10e.
< f. Define projected maintenance costs.						10f.
g. Other: _____ n/a						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

10b. FWP will not designate this tract as a state park nor request tax exemption status; therefore, tax payments will continue to Chouteau County in an amount similar to past years. 1999 tax payment was \$87.

10e. Very little funding is needed to complete this donation of land to FWP. FWP has agreed to cover the costs of an appraisal, environmental assessment preparation, closing costs, title insurance and recording fees, for a total of approximately \$3,000. This money will come from the Parks Division accounts. No revenue will be collected at this site.

10f. No maintenance costs will be incurred by FWP to maintain this property. It will not be improved for a state park or recreation area and is intended for use in a land exchange in the near future. Annual taxes will be near \$90, based on previous records. This too will be paid by the Parks Division.

Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

## HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

< 11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION	IMPACT <sup>3</sup>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sup>3</sup>	None	Minor <sup>3</sup>	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
<c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings?			X positive			11c.
∞d. For P-R/D-I, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c)		n/a				
e. Other: _____ n/a						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

Physical attributes and use of the site will remain if FWP acquires the tract. This rugged canyon offers scenic vistas and remote recreational opportunities. This tract is near the Wild and Scenic River boundary and has the potential to help link the nationally protected corridor with several sections of state land.

11c. Acquisition of land available for public access is a benefit to recreationists of many kinds as more land in Montana is closed to the public. The quantity and quality of remote types of recreation can be slightly increased by adding another 320 acres to public access and because it adjoins existing state and federal land.

## HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES	IMPACT <sup>3</sup>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sup>3</sup>	None	Minor <sup>3</sup>	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
<a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				12a.
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
∞d. For P-R/D-I, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a)		n/a				
e. Other: _____ n/a						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

12a. The site will not be altered under FWP ownership. If cultural sites exist on the property, they will become an undertaking of FWP and subject to protection under the State Antiquities Act.

- 3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- < Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- ∞ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- ∞∞ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

## HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

12. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE	IMPACT <sup>3</sup>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sup>3</sup>	None	Minor <sup>3</sup>	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:						
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				13c.
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
For P-R/D-I, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e)		n/a				
For P-R/D-I, list any federal or state permits required.		n/a				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

13a. Due to the lack of change proposed for the site, no impacts are anticipated to the wildlife habitat or potential cultural sites if FWP acquires this 320 acres. These two items, however, could present restrictions on FWP in the future when attempting to change the property for tract(s) which will more closely meet the departments' goals. Restrictions may come in the form of mitigation or specific characteristics which the exchange property may need to allow an exchange of near equal values.

Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

**2. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action, whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider, and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:**

**Alternative 1. No Action**

If no action is taken, the private owner will likely sell the property at the current market rate to a private individual or make a donation to another agency with adjacent land. He does not own neighboring land and does not wish to manage this parcel. The Parks Division of FWP has very limited funding, both in total dollar amount and allowed uses for that funding. This donation can be used as a tool to acquire park in-holdings or new lands in the state that are culturally, historically or recreationally significant to Montanans.

**Alternative 2. Preferred Alternative (Proposed Action): Accept 320-acre donation.**

This alternative indirectly supplements the Parks funding base and provides potential for exchanging valuable land within the state when opportunities arise. The property will require no maintenance costs and has limited liabilities for the state.

**Alternative 3. Define a Wildlife Easement**

The components of this tract do not match the FWP habitat programs. It is a relatively small patch of habitat and has little or no access.

**3. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:**

No significant impacts were identified requiring mitigation. If cultural sites are present on the site, they will be afforded greater protection under the State Antiquities Act.

**4. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? NO**

**If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.**

This environmental review revealed no significant negative impacts from the proposed action; therefore, an EIS is not necessary and an Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis.

**5. Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?**

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on the EA, the proposed action and alternatives:

- One legal notice in each of these papers: Helena Independent Record, Great Falls Tribune, Fort Benton River Press
- Public Notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.state.mt.us/notices/default.asp>

Copies of the EA will be mailed directly to the adjacent landowners to ensure their knowledge of the proposed action.

The opportunities for public input listed above are appropriate for the proposed actions since few negative environmental impacts are identified.

#### 6. Duration of comment period if any:

The public comment period will extend for thirty (30) days following the publication of the legal notice. Written comments will be accepted from 8:00 a.m., September 26<sup>th</sup> until 5:00 p.m., October 23, 2001 and can be mailed to the address below:

Wilson Land Acquisition  
Attention Tom Reilly  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620-0701

Or e-mailed to: *treilly@state.mt.us*

#### 7. Name, title, address and phone number of the Person(s) Responsible for Preparing the EA:

Sue Dalbey  
Independent Contractor  
Dalbey Resources  
926 N. Lamborn St.  
Helena, MT 59601  
406-443-8058

Debby Dils  
Lands Section Supervisor  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620-0701  
406-444-4063

Tom Reilly  
Assist. State Parks Administrator  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620-0701  
406-444-3750

### PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The proposed donation is a gift that FWP would be wise to accept. Funding for park land acquisitions is very slim and occasionally opportunities arise for exchanges when it is helpful to have surplus property for bargaining. The land has no restrictions, and though it is not a property that specifically meets the department's goals for park acquisitions, it provides the potential to acquire a prime tract in the future.

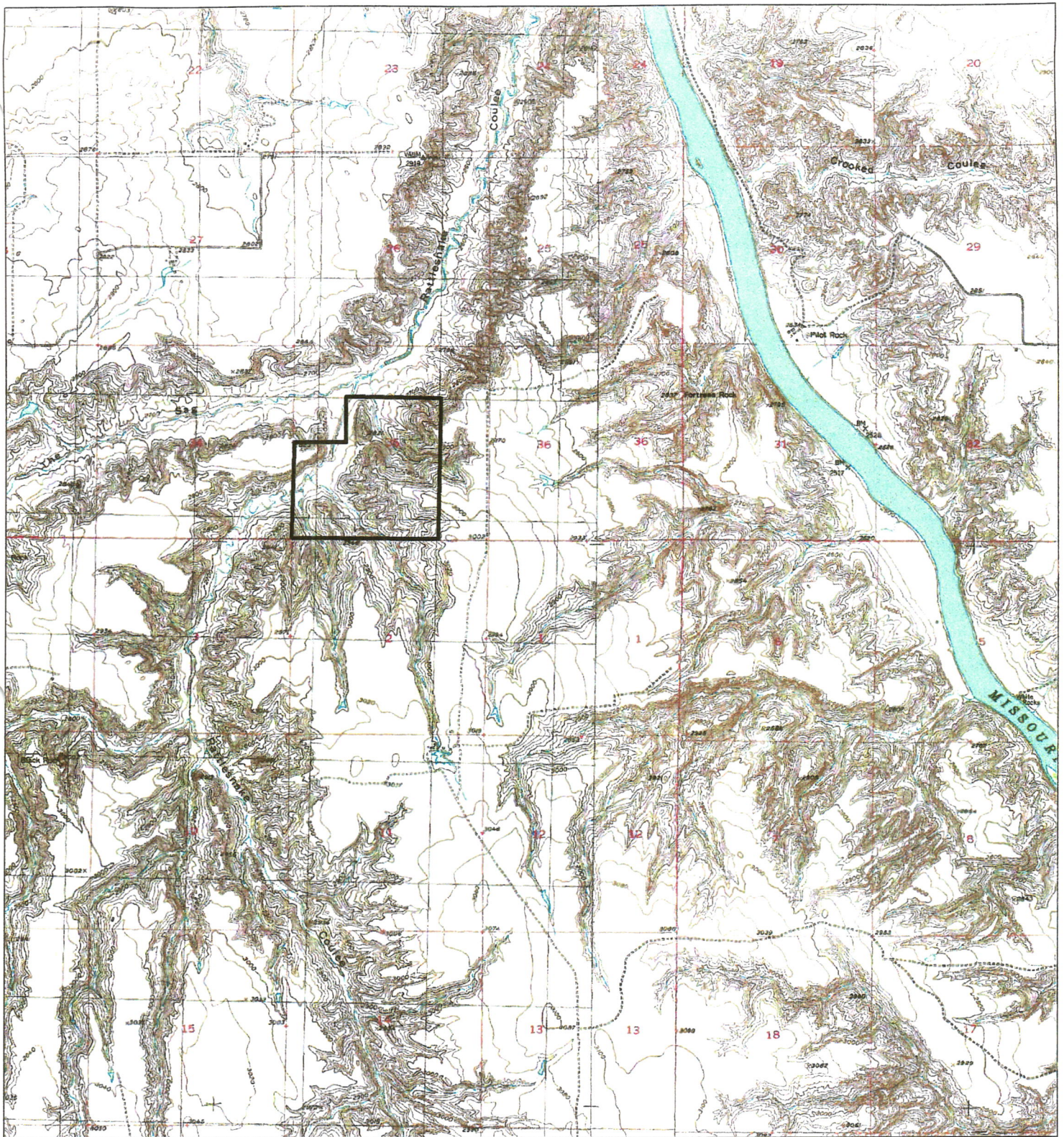
The property does provide excellent mule deer habitat and supports area sage grouse. It does also have some value in blocking up public lands for recreation and habitat protection.

No negative impacts were identified in the analysis of this donation and no major costs associated with the transaction or continued ownership by FWP. Another environmental assessment must be completed prior to future actions by the department, including a change in land use such as for grazing, potential development, or use in a land exchange. The public would be able to comment on any future actions.

#### APPENDICES

1. Site Location Map
2. Site Topographical Map

# PROPOSED DARRYL WILSON LAND DONATION



Map produced by:  
Martie Crone  
Land Section, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Helena, Montana  
wilson.apr 9/18/01

Proposed acquisition area screen-digitized and boundaries are approximate. Background image is a USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle digital raster graphic. State Plane 1983 projection.

0.5 0 0.5 1 Miles

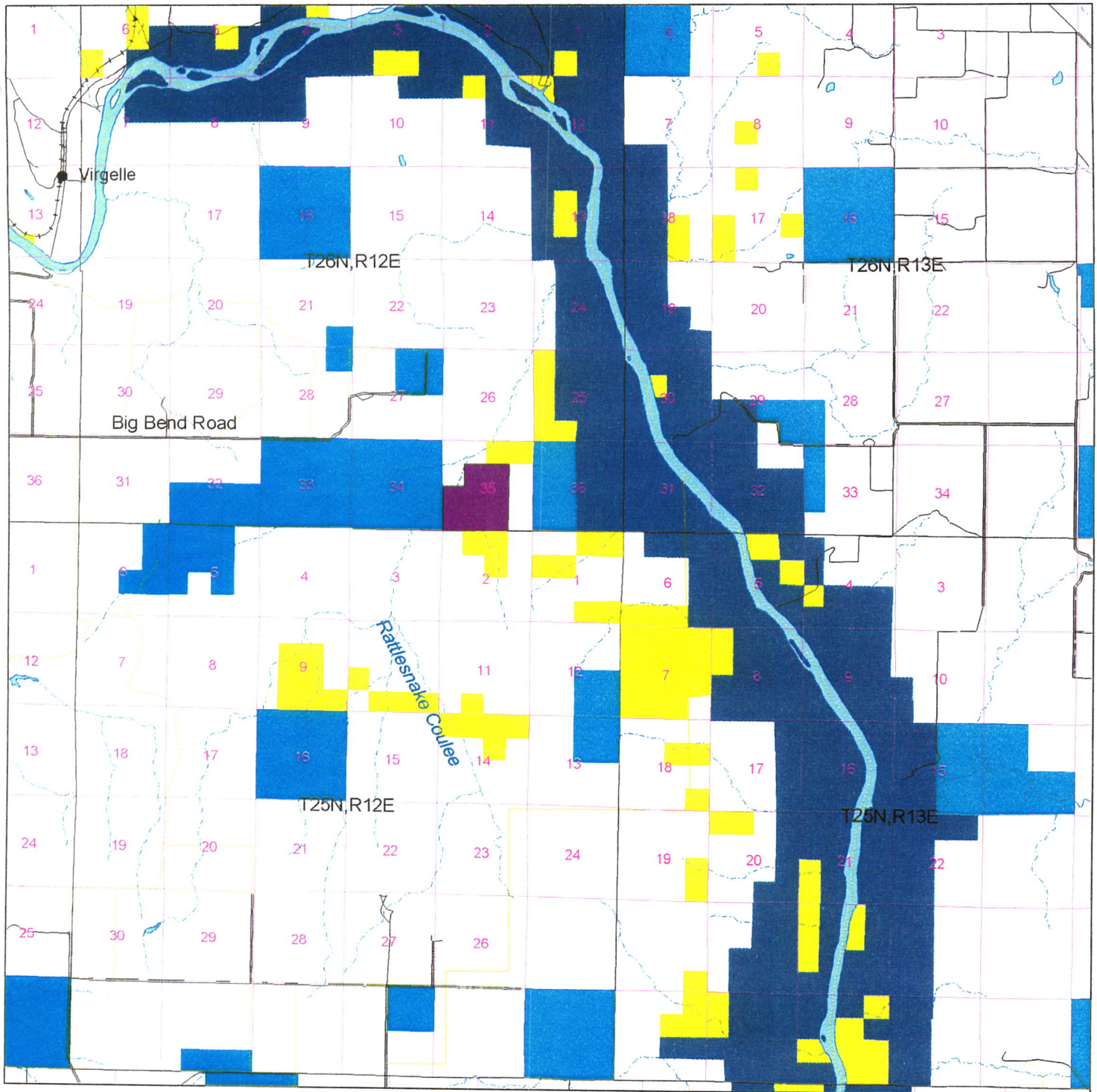


**Montana Fish,  
Wildlife & Parks**

SITE TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP

APPENDIX 2

# PROPOSED DARRYL WILSON LAND DONATION



 Proposed Donation

## Land Ownership

-  Private
-  US - BLM
-  State of Montana
-  US - Wild & Scenic River
-  Water

Map produced by:  
Martie Crone  
Land Section, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Helena, Montana  
Wilson, apr 4/4/01

Proposed areas screen-digitized and boundaries are approximate. Hydrography, roads, public land survey system and public land ownership from the Natural Resource Information System, Montana State Library, Helena, MT, and all were digitized at 1:100,000. State Plane 1983 Projection.



**Montana Fish,  
Wildlife & Parks**

## SITE LOCATION MAP

## APPENDIX 1